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ABSTRACT

To meet the needs of pregnant and parenting adolescents in Boulder Valley (Colorado), the local public school district has developed the Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program, now in its 12th year. The program was designed to help teen parents to mature to meet the challenges of parenting, enhance the school district's dropout/intervention assistance to students, expand opportunities for teen parents to participate in vocational education and acquire employment, and to expand teen parent opportunities to graduate from high school. The program is fully integrated into the traditional secondary school environment and includes a comprehensive child care component. Program operations include the following: (1) two staff members; (2) a nurse and an early childhood development specialist; (3) pre-employment training, jobs, basis skills instruction, and summer school; (4) a licensed childcare facility; (5) a fenced toddler play area; (6) referral for counseling; (7) bus transportation to and from school; (8) daily involvement of foster grandparents; (9) internship placement for local university and college students; and (10) access to all high school classes and activities. The program draws on extensive county resources and has received strong positive evaluation and nation-wide recognition. Included are five references. (JB)

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BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOLS TEEN PARENTING PROGRAM

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BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOLS TEEN PARENTING PROGRAM

Sally is sixteen years old, and five months pregnant. She has never thought about having an abortion; the father of the baby, who is a twenty-year old high school dropout, urged her to have his baby. She has just recently told her parents about her pregnancy. Sally, like many pregnant and parenting adolescents, has had no prenantal health care. School has not been a successful experience for her. She feels confused, and very much alone.

What can public educational school systems do for Sally, and the many pregnant and parenting adolescents who find themselves in similar situations each year? It turns out that they can do a great deal. Many programs for adolescent pregnant and parenting teens have produced measurable results in positively affecting the lives of pregnant and parenting teens, their children and significant others.

The Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program is in its twelfth year of operation. The program is a nationally recognized, exemplary program for meeting both the educational and vocational needs of all school age parents and parents-to-be, both mothers and fathers, and their children. The Teen Parenting Program is located in Boulder, Colorado at Fairview High School and is fully integrated into the traditional secondary school environment. The program is administered by Dr. Lonnie Hart, Executive Director of Adult, Vocational, and Community Education and is coordinated by Gloria Parmerlee-Greiner. The Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program is designed to accomplish the following goals:

-To help "parents too soon" grow to the challenges of child rearing, social, and economic self-sufficiency.

-To enhance the Boulder Valley School District's dropout/intervention assistance to students.

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-To expand opportunities for teen parents to participate in vocational education and acquire gainful employment.

-To expand teen parent opportunities to complete high school and graduate.

PROGRAM RATIONALE:

It is well documented that among high risk groups, certain ethnic and economically disadvantaged populations have excessively high rates of school dropouts. Among dropouts, teen parents are known to be students most at risk for dropping out and are a student population which cuts across ethnic and economic categories.

Teen pregnancy and teen parenting are among the most talked about, serious, and expensive social issues of our time. This dilemma negatively impacts the social welfare system. Colorado taxpayers spend $200 million per year on public assistance to families started by a teen mother. Each school dropout, and teen parents are especially high risk for dropping out of school, will cost taxpayers $200,000 in public assistance to support the unemployed and underemployed. Every dollar invested in teen pregnancy prevention saves Colorado taxpayers $12 (1989 Colorado Initiative on Teen Pregnancy).

Teen pregnancy is the leading cause of females dropping out of school. Of those who drop out of school in Boulder County, 61% are teen parents (Governor's Initiative on Teen Pregnancy, 1988).

Since its inception in 1980, the The Teen Parenting Program has served 550 teen parents, their children, and significant others. Eighty-five percent of these students and their children have been categorized as "at risk". Over 70% of the pregnant and parenting adolescents served are from multiracial/ethnic and/or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. For each of the past five years, the program has consistantly served approximately 65 teen parents and their children which represents approximately 25 infants and 15 toddlers, and their

significant others. The Teen Parenting Program has open enrollment and therefore can expect to continue enrolling pregnant and parenting adolescents and their children throughout the school year.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Boulder Valley Schools Vocational Home Economics Teen Parenting Program, is a district wide magnet program, housed at Fairview High School. It is leading the way in exemplifying the Governor's 1989 Resolution that public school systems operate teen parent programs. The school district has maintained a nationally recognized teen parent program since its inception in 1980. Each year the program has grown in its capacity to serve and has increased opportunities for teen parents to educate themselves, to gain job skills for self-sufficient living, to develop positive parenting skills, and to acquire social skills for full participation and contribution as residents of Boulder County and citizens of the world. Both teen mothers and teen fathers are encouraged to consider this educational opportunity.

A key facet of the Teen Parenting Program and one of the reasons for its distinctiveness is its comprehensive child care component. Children of teen parents are cared from from two-weeks of age until four years of age in a licensed child care facility which is housed at Fairview High School. Child care is available to teen parents five days per week from 7:30 A.M. until 4:30 P.M. during the regular school year. The large child care facility, licensed for 37 children, offers both infant and toddler nurseries, and, for qualified families, a link to Headstart and district preschool programs.

Since it's inception, the Teen Parenting Program has continued to be responsive to the special needs of the fathers. Teen fathers are retrieved along with the teen mother and encouraged to return to school. Fathers are counseled and provided assistance in acquiring vocational and job related training. The program helps to link the father with community

agencies to provide services in such areas as job training and placement, mental health and counseling, family planning, social services, etc. Fathers are included and participate in support groups, parenting classes and other classroom activities, natural childbirth classes, social functions, advisory counsels, etc.

PROGRAM OPERATION:

The following is an inventory of the program's current personnel, facilities and services:

-Is staffed with 1 FTE vocationally credentialed home economics instructor, coordinator of program.

-Is staffed with 60% FTE vocationally credentialed home economics instructor to teach the core program.

-In partnership with Boulder County Health Department(BCHD) and Boulder Valley School District co-funds a .5 FTE public health nurse to provide pre-and-post natal services, well baby care, health instruction for positive parenting, and pregnancy prevention to students in the program and other identified "at risk" adolescents.

-Through GENESIS grant funds, coordinated by BCHD, the program receives the services of .5 FTE early childhood development specialist.

-The City of Boulder grant funds "contract for services" a master's level social worker to provide family intervention/prevention and support services for one day per week.

-Operates as a core component of Boulder Valley School District's vocational home economics program--receives state and federal Carl Perkins funds.

-Is mainstreamed into and shares facilities as a district magnate program with Fairview High School, one of five and largest of the district's secondary schools.

-In partnership with Boulder County Employment and Training

Center provides pre-employment training, career assessment, jobs, basis skills instruction, and summer school.

-Operates a licensed large childcare facility for infants and toddlers (licensed for 19 infants and 17 toddlers) with up to 6 FTE paraprofessional childcare employees.

-Maintains a fenced toddler play area adjacent to childcare and instructional spaces.

-Refers students and their children for counseling and support services as needed.

-Provides school bus transportation to and from school for teen parents and their children.

-In partnership with the Volunteers of America Program maintains daily involvement of 2 "foster grandparents" in nurseries and classroom activities.

-Is guided by a citizens advisory committee composed of public and private agencies also contributing to teen parent services.

-Provides supervised placement for internships for local university and college students.

-Provides for full access to all high school academic, enrichment, athletic, and activities--plus vocational home economics. In addition, teen parents are counseled and encouraged to attend the district's Technical Education Center for specific employment education. The district provides transportation to and from the Technical Center and child care is provided in the Teen Parenting Center located at Fairview High School.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE PROGRAM:

The Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program coordinates its services to teen parent families with a large number of community and governmental organizations and individuals. Major affiliations are as follows:

-Colorado Department of Health Child Care Food Program provides reimbursement funding for infants' and toddlers' breakfasts, lunches and snacks.

-Community Food Share Program provides low cost food to the Teen Parenting Program.

-Head Start provides preschool and child care for our teen parents' four-year-olds.

-Social Services provides assistance with AFDC, food stamps, subsidized daycare, housing, etc.

-Emergency Family Assitance, Echo House, Safe House, Children's Alley, the Boulder Child Care Support Center, and other such agencies provide services as needed.

-WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) provides vouchers for nutrition and nutritional education for qualified teen parents and their children.

-People's Clinic, San Juan People's Clinic, and La Clinica Campensina provides low cost/no cost health care and counseling for our teen parents and their families.

-Boulder Planned Parenthood Women's Health Clinic provides a variety of low cost/no cost health services.

-Boulder County Community Infant Project (CIP) provides assistance to identified at risk infants and parents. A social worker and nurse work together as a team.

-Boulder County Employment and Training Center provides job training education and employment assistance.

-GENESIS Project: This is a multi-agency project which will provide services to selected pregnant and parenting teens and their extended families. The primary goal of this project is to intervene in the cross generational aspects of substance abuse and other family dysfunctions.

-TransAct and Child Find provide screening and services to identified infants and children with special needs.

-Volunteers of America provide foster grandparents for program's infant and toddler centers, and also tutors for teen parents.

-University of Colorado nursing program for in-school individual and group instruction, usually on a short-time basis.

-Local colleges and universities for interns, student teachers and volunteers.

-BVSD Technical Education Center practical nursing program for infant and toddler practicum training and post-secondary OJT students.

-Other community volunteers which include: high school students, advisory committee members, retired seniors, psychologists, counselors, etc.

PROGRAM EVALUATION:

In Boulder, it is estimated that from 100 to 200 girls between 10 and 19 years old become pregnant each year. In 1987, "121 young women (were identified) who have children or about to give birth". (Longmont Times Call, Teen Parenting Struggles To Survive, 11/87.) More than 61% of pregnant teenagers in Boulder County in 1987 dropped out of School. (Colorado Governor's Initiative on Teen Pregnancy, 1988.)

In Colorado, about 10,000 teenage girls from 10 to 19 years old get pregnant each year, resulting in about 5,700 births. Approximately 30% of these births are second and third children born to adolescents still in their teens. (Adolescent Health In Colorado, Colorado Dept. of Health, 1989.) Of the teens enrolled in Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program, fewer than 5% have had second and/or third children while still in their teens.

Evidence from a broad variety of teen pregnancy prevention programs suggests that giving teens information alone does not significently effect

changes in behavior and reduce the rate of teen pregnancy. The Teen Parenting Program provides educational instruction, experiences and activities designed to improve self-esteem, encourage family values, assist in life skills development, and aid in the skills necessary for responsible decision-making and sees this as being more effective in the prevention of a myriad of adolescent high risk behaviors, including repeat pregnancies.

Colorado has the highest race-adjusted rate of low birth weight babies in the nation. These babies, with their resultant increased health and retardation risks, are born to Colorado teens with a 40% greater frequency than to women after the age of 20. The number of low birth weight babies born to teenage mothers in Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program is significantly lower than expected for this population, less than 2%.

Boulder Valley Schools teen parents, along with their infants and toddlers, visit each of the school district's junior and senior high health and home economics' child development classes, to talk with other teens concerning the responsibilities of being a teen parent. The intent is pregnancy prevention and to promote responsible and safe sex behavior.

Teen Parenting Program participation significantly increases the likelihood of graduation. While an estimated 50-60% of all adolescent girls who become mothers never finish high school (Hayes, 1987), a significant number of the program's participants graduate, receive GED's, complete vocational programs and increase basic skills. Many go on to college and post-secondary education.

The success and effectiveness of Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program is directly attributed to the professional expertise and prevention/intervention stratergies employed by the school district, program personnel and supportive community.

SPECIAL PROGRAM FEATURES:

Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program has been identified as an exemplary program by the Colorado Department of Education receiving the State Board of Education and Commissioner's Exemplary Award (1988) and the Governor's School Volunteer Award (1988), Colorado Community Colleges and Occupational Education Awards of Excellence (1986 and 1988) and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education Exemplary Award (1991).

The program's teen parents have been featured on national television, Gary Collins Show; Governor of Colorado "Youth 2000 Conference" video; Seventeen magazine; and frequently in the local news medial, newspaper and television. Local businesses (IBM, Rockwell International, U.S. West, Mead Johnson and Ross Labs), individuals, churches and organizations (Kiwanis, Boulder Medical Society Auxillary, March of Dimes, Rotary, Zonta, Santa House, Boulder Valley Schools Foundation, Boulder Valley Schools Substance Abuse Prevention Project, Charter Foundation, etc), are frequent contributors of products, supplies and services in recognition of the program's contributions to youth.

The program serves as a model for other districts who are presently developing teen parenting programs. Many on-site visitations are made during the year by numerous local, state, and national groups interested in providing services to teen parents.

This program identifies each individual as being unique and special. Emphasis is placed on building self-esteem, teaching responsibility, and developing coping skills. The program provides a support system that is responsive to the special needs of pregnant and parenting adolescents, their children, and significant others.

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